United Nations A/56/PV.111

General Assembly
Fifty-sixth session

Official Records

111th plenary meeting
Friday, 6 September 2002, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Han Seung-soo ..... (Republic of Korea)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 125 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations

Letter dated 4 September 2002 from the Secretary-General to the President of the General Assembly (A/56/999/Add.1)

The President: I should like just to draw the attention of the General Assembly to document A/56/999/Add.1. In the letter contained in that document, the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of his letter contained in document A/56/999, Uzbekistan has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in that document?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 49 (*continued*)

Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters

Report of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council (A/56/47)

Draft decision (A/56/47, paragraph 26)

The President: Members will recall that the General Assembly held a debate on this item at its 33rd to 36th plenary meetings, from 30 October to 1 November 2001.

The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft decision contained in paragraph 26 of the report of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft decision?

The draft decision was adopted.

The President: I should like to express sincere thanks to Ambassador Thorsteinn Ingólfsson of Iceland and Ambassador Mignonette Patricia Durrant of Jamaica, the two Vice-Chairpersons of the Open-ended Working Group, who have so ably conducted the discussions and complex negotiations of the Working Group. I am sure that members of the Assembly will join me in extending to them our sincere appreciation.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

02-58053 (E)

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 49?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 175

Peace, security and reunification on the Korean peninsula

Letter dated 22 August 2002 from the Permanent Representatives of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (A/56/1029)

The President: Members will recall that, at its 3rd plenary meeting, held on 19 September 2001, the General Assembly included item 175 on the agenda of the fifty-sixth session.

In connection with this item, I should like to draw the attention of members to document A/56/1029, which contains a letter dated 22 August 2002 from the Permanent Representatives of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea in which it is requested that the item entitled "Peace, security and reunification on the Korean peninsula" be included in the agenda of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the draft agenda of the fifty-seventh session?

It was so decided.

The President: That concludes our consideration of agenda item 175.

Agenda item 17 (*continued*)

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(e) Appointment of members of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal

The President: Members will recall that, at its 3rd plenary meeting, held on 19 September 2001, the Assembly decided to include this item in the agenda of the present session. Members will further recall that item (e) is included in the provisional agenda of the fifty-seventh session.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of this sub-item and of item 17 as a whole?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 47

The situation of democracy and human rights in Haiti

The President: Members will recall that, at its 3rd plenary meeting, held on 19 September 2001, the Assembly decided to include this item in the agenda of the present session. Members will also recall that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 55/285, of 7 September 2001, the item shall be considered biennially starting at the fifty-sixth session.

May I thus take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 47?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 58

United Nations reform: measures and proposals

The President: Members will recall that, at its 3rd plenary meeting, held on 19 September 2001, the Assembly decided to include this item in the agenda of the present session. Members will also recall that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 55/285, of 7 September 2001, the item shall be considered biennially starting at the fifty-sixth session.

May I thus take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 58?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 59 (*continued*)

Strengthening of the United Nations system

The President: Members will recall that, at its 91st plenary meeting, held on 21 December 2001, the Assembly adopted decision 56/455 under this item.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to include this item in the draft agenda of its fifty-seventh session?

It was so decided.

The President: That concludes our consideration of agenda item 59.

Agenda item 60 (*continued*)

Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

The President: Members will recall that, at its 91st plenary meeting, held on 21 December 2001, the Assembly adopted decision 56/455 under this item, and that at its 106th plenary meeting, held on 8 July 2002, the Assembly adopted resolution 56/509, also under this item.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to include this item in the draft agenda of its fifty-seventh session?

It was so decided.

The President: That concludes our consideration of agenda item 60.

Agenda item 61

Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields

The President: Members will recall that, at its 3rd plenary meeting, held on 19 September 2001, the Assembly decided to include this item in the agenda of the present session. Members will also recall that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 55/285, of 7 September 2001, the item shall be considered biennially starting at the fifty-sixth session.

May I thus take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of this item?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 62

Question of Cyprus

The President: Members may recall that, at its 3rd plenary meeting, held on 19 September 2001, the Assembly decided to include this item in the agenda of the present session but deferred a decision on the allocation of the item to an appropriate time during the session.

It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item to the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. May I take it, then, that it is the wish of the Assembly to defer its consideration of this item and to include it in the draft agenda of the fifty-seventh session?

It was so decided.

The President: That concludes our consideration of agenda item 62.

Agenda item 129

Improving the financial situation of the United Nations

The President: Members will recall that, at its 3rd plenary meeting, held on 19 September 2001, the Assembly decided to include this item in the agenda of the present session.

It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item to the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the draft agenda of the fifty-seventh session?

It was so decided.

The President: That concludes our consideration of agenda item 129.

Agenda item 140

Financing of the United Nations Mission in East Timor

The President: Members will recall that, at its 3rd plenary meeting, held on 19 September 2001, the Assembly decided to include this item in the agenda of the present session.

It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item to the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the draft agenda of the fifty-seventh session?

It was so decided.

The President: That concludes our consideration of agenda item 140.

Agenda item 143

Financing of the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan

The President: Members will recall that, at its 3rd plenary meeting, held on 19 September 2001, the Assembly decided to include this item in the agenda of the present session.

It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item to the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the draft agenda of the fifty-seventh session?

It was so decided.

The President: That concludes our consideration of agenda item 143.

Agenda item 145

Financing and liquidation of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia

The President: Members will recall that, at its 3rd plenary meeting, held on 19 September 2001, the Assembly decided to include this item in the agenda of the present session.

It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item to the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the draft agenda of the fifty-seventh session?

It was so decided.

The President: That concludes our consideration of agenda item 145.

Agenda item 148

Financing of the United Nations Operation in Mozambique

The President: Members will recall that, at its 3rd plenary meeting, held on 19 September 2001, the Assembly decided to include this item in the agenda of the present session.

It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item to the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the draft agenda of the fifty-seventh session?

It was so decided.

The President: That concludes our consideration of agenda item 148.

Agenda item 152

Financing of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia

The President: Members will recall that, at its 3rd plenary meeting, held on 19 September 2001, the Assembly decided to include this item in the agenda of the present session.

It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item to the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the draft agenda of the fifty-seventh session?

It was so decided.

The President: That concludes our consideration of agenda item 152.

Agenda item 153

Financing of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda

The President: Members will recall that, at its 3rd plenary meeting, held on 19 September 2001, the Assembly decided to include this item in the agenda of the present session.

It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item to the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the draft agenda of the fifty-seventh session?

It was so decided.

The President: That concludes our consideration of agenda item 153.

Agenda item 157

Financing of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic

The President: Members will recall that, at its 3rd plenary meeting, held on 19 September 2001, the Assembly decided to include this item in the agenda of the present session.

It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item to the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the draft agenda of the fifty-seventh session?

It was so decided.

The President: That concludes our consideration of agenda item 157.

Announcement

The President: Before adjourning the meeting, I should like to remind members that the closing meeting of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly will take place on Monday, 9 September 2002 at 3 p.m. in the newly decorated General Assembly Hall.

The meeting rose at 10.25 a.m.

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General Assembly
Fifty-sixth session

Official Records

112th plenary meeting

Monday, 9 September 2002, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Han Seung-soo ..... (Republic of Korea)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 10 (*continued*)

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization

Draft resolution (A/56/L.85)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/56/L.85, entitled "Prevention of armed conflict".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/56/L.85?

Draft resolution A/56/L.85 was adopted (resolution 56/ 512).

The President: I should like to express sincere thanks to Ambassador Pierre Schori, Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations, and to Ambassador Stig Elvemar of the Permanent Mission of Sweden to the United Nations for conducting the open-ended informal consultations.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 10?

It was so decided.

Agenda items remaining for consideration during the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly

The President: I should like to remind delegations that the following agenda items, on which action has been taken at previous meetings, have remained open for consideration during the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly: items 11, 12, 15, 19, 20, 22, 26, 29, 40 to 44, 50, 51, 96, 98, 102, 109, 112, 119 to 128, 130 to 139, 141, 142, 144, 146, 147, 149 to 151, 154 to 156, 158, 166 and 169.

As members are aware, those items, with the exception of item 122, entitled "Programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001", have been included in the provisional agenda of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

May I take it that the Assembly considers that discussion of those items at the present session is concluded?

It was so decided.

Closing statement by the President

The President: We have now come to the end of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly, and it is time for me to declare the session closed. As we look back over the past year, I am sure we are all overwhelmed and humbled by a flood of thoughts and emotions. Words such as "extraordinary", "unusual" or "unprecedented" have been used to characterize our session, so much so that they have become clichés by now. I have been deeply honoured and privileged to serve as President of the General Assembly during this unique and eventful year of great accomplishments for the United Nations. Allow me to share with members some of my thoughts on this occasion.

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02-58059 (E)

Our session began in a state of crisis triggered by the most atrocious acts of terrorism in history. My term as President was to start on 11 September 2001, a date now etched in everyone's memory for a very different reason and because of a very different event. Under serious security threats to the United Nations Headquarters building itself, I had urgent consultations with Secretary-General Kofi Annan. We decided to open the General Assembly the next day, on 12 September. Directly after my assumption of the presidency, the General Assembly adopted its first resolution of the session, resolution 56/1, condemning strongly the terrorist attacks and calling for international cooperation to eradicate terrorism.

The three months following that day turned out to be one of the most extraordinary and demanding periods in the annals of the General Assembly. We had to reorganize virtually all of our work programme. We devoted one whole week of our debate to measures to combat terrorism, during which the Mayor of New York City was invited to speak for the first time at the United Nations. We also held a two-day meeting on the theme of Dialogue among civilizations to promote inter-cultural understanding, which had particular relevance in the context of our pressing concern with terrorism.

Terrorism also topped the agenda of the general debate, which was held in November, two months later than usual, over a period of only seven days but still with the participation of 187 delegations, including 41 heads of State or Government. Joined in the view that international terrorism constitutes a threat to international peace and security as well as a crime against humanity, Member States underscored the key role to be played by the United Nations in intensifying international efforts to eliminate terrorism. Many also cautioned that the fight against terrorism should not be connected with any religion or ethnicity.

The heightened awareness of the nature and threat of terrorism has been paralleled by progress in strengthening the legal framework against terrorism, especially through the work of the Sixth Committee. The Assembly has accelerated work with a view to an early conclusion of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism. At the same time, I have urged Member States that have not yet done so to become parties, as a matter of priority, to the existing international conventions relating to terrorism. I hope that the momentum we have created will be built upon during the next session so that the remaining questions can be resolved towards the establishment of a more effective legal framework to root out terrorism.

Also high on our agenda has been the question of Afghanistan. The General Assembly has taken coordinated measures with the Security Council to restore peace and security in that war-ravaged nation and to assist in its reconstruction. We welcomed the establishment of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and warmly appreciated the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative to promote peace and security in that country. We have responded promptly and concretely to the need of the Afghan people for massive humanitarian assistance as well as for support in their post-conflict reconstruction efforts.

Thus coping with the new challenges, we have also been steadfast in furthering important work already begun. Being the first session of the General Assembly after the historic Millennium Assembly of 2000, our meetings made major advances in the follow-up to the Millennium Declaration. Noting with appreciation the road map report of the Secretary-General (A/56/326), the Assembly recommended that it be considered a useful guide in the implementation of the Declaration by the United Nations system, and requested the Secretary-General to prepare annual as well as five-year comprehensive reports on progress achieved towards implementing the Declaration.

In that regard, I called upon Member States to sustain the political will of the Millennium Summit and to take comprehensive and balanced measures to turn the goals of the Millennium Declaration into reality. The implementation of the Declaration can be effective only through the participation of and cooperation among all actors, including States, the United Nations system, other international and regional organizations and civil society.

On the economic front, too, it has been a challenging time for us. With much of the global attention focused on the fight against terrorism, and with the world economy moving perilously close to another recession, we still managed to make progress in a number of important areas. In particular, we have moved forward in our pursuit of development. There have been major events and actions towards the implementation of the millennium development goals.

In the process, the Assembly has maintained its focus on, among other things, the eradication of poverty.

The momentum generated by the Millennium Summit has been preserved through major United Nations meetings on development held in and outside New York, such as the International Conference on Financing for Development, in March; the meeting of the General Assembly devoted to information and communication technologies for development, in June; and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held earlier this month. By addressing the critical issues of development financing, the digital divide and sustainable development, respectively, those landmark gatherings have made vital contributions to the international community's endeavours to achieve economic and social development objectives.

In that regard, I have accorded particular priority to the issue of development of Africa. African development — a common element that cuts across the issues of poverty eradication, HIV/AIDS, sustainable development and conflict prevention — has become one of the most daunting challenges of our time. It is in this context that, last April, I visited four West African countries: Ghana, Sierra Leone, the Gambia and Senegal. During those visits, I reaffirmed the strong support of the United Nations system for the efforts of African countries to promote economic and political development, and I exchanged views with their leaders on finding better ways and means to realize our common goals.

This year, with the final review of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s under way, we have welcomed the New Partnership for Africa's Development, on which a high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly will be held next week. Learning from the lessons of the New Agenda, we have renewed our commitment to promoting African development in all its aspects. In a related development, the Assembly's decision last year to create the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States should be considered a major step forward in advocating the cause of the least developed countries.

Our achievements have been no less substantial in the area of human rights and social issues. Postponed in the aftermath of 11 September, the special session on children, held in May this year, proved to be a historic gathering of world leaders to reaffirm their commitment to building a world fit for children. At the opposite end of the age spectrum, the Second World Assembly on Ageing produced a Plan of Action that will guide our efforts to meet the challenges of ageing populations and their far-reaching socio-economic consequences.

In these and other endeavours of the United Nations, civil society has become an increasingly important partner. Multi-stakeholder participation has now become established practice in areas as diverse as health and immunization, the rights and well-being of children and the harnessing of information and communication technologies for development. I would like to express my satisfaction at the Assembly's growing recognition of the instrumental contributions of non-governmental organizations and civil society in general to our work in the economic, social and related fields.

Meanwhile, we have taken a great step forward in reforming the United Nations, with a small but significant change. Through a series of informal meetings of the Assembly, we were able to amend the relevant rules of procedure of the General Assembly in order to elect the President and other officials at least three months before the beginning of a new session. This change does not merely represent a procedural modification; it is designed to ensure a more efficient transition and continuity between successive presidencies, and thus facilitate and strengthen the role of the President of the General Assembly.

In accordance with the new rules, the former deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, Jan Kavan, was elected as my successor, and the Assembly also elected the 21 vice-presidents and the six Main Committee chairpersons for the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. Since then, I have met with President-elect Kavan, as have our two cabinet teams, in many consultations covering all issues relating to our transition. Indeed, this has been the first substantive transition process for the presidency, and it should set a precedent for future sessions of the General Assembly and other bodies in the United Nations system.

We have also deliberated the issue of Security Council reform through the Open-ended Working Group on that matter, which met in four sessions from February to July this year. Now in its ninth year, the

Working Group has made some progress in the area of the working methods of the Security Council. The more difficult area of membership expansion has not seen much change, except for the addition of a few new proposals. More active debate is expected during the tenth year of the Working Group.

On a day-to-day level, I have endeavoured to improve the way in which we conduct the business of the General Assembly. To make our meetings more efficient — especially when they had to be shortened and condensed because of the contingencies of last year — I called for punctuality with time and parsimony with words on the part of everyone. I kept my door open at all times and met with as many people as I could. I also consulted as often as possible with the President of the Security Council and the President of the Economic and Social Council, as well as the chairpersons of regional groups.

As we look back on the fifty-sixth session, the magnitude and intensity of our work are reflected in the numbers. We have dealt with 173 agenda items, held 112 plenary meetings and adopted 359 resolutions and 107 decisions. We also held a special session and three rounds of the resumed emergency special session, at which a total of five resolutions and nine decisions were adopted.

As President of the General Assembly, I paid official visits to 12 countries. They are, in the order in which I visited them: Ghana, Sierra Leone, the Gambia, Senegal, East Timor — on the occasion of its independence, together with the Secretary-General — Japan, Italy, the Holy See, Austria, the Czech Republic, Australia and Singapore. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the respective Governments once again for their cooperation and hospitality. I also visited the United Nations Offices in Geneva and in Vienna, as well as United Nations peacekeepers in the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone.

In reviewing the past year, however, it would not be fair for me to fail to mention the tasks that remain unfinished and that need to be dealt with on a continuing basis by my successors. These include, among others, measures to eliminate terrorism, prevent conflict, ensure Security Council reform and revitalize the General Assembly. With regard to that last item in particular, I believe that greater consideration should be given to ways to strengthen and institutionalize the role of the President of the General Assembly, in terms not only of the Assembly but also of United Nations meetings held away from Headquarters. We must also heed the views of some Member States that the recent surge of mega-conferences held outside United Nations bodies proper could end up marginalizing the latter and could thus run counter to our goal of strengthening and revitalizing the role of the major United Nations organs.

The world today is certainly a very different place from the world that gave birth to the United Nations 57 years ago, in the aftermath of the Second World War. There have been many changes, of which I would like to mention three that directly relate to the future of our world body.

First, the field of international relations is becoming increasingly crowded, with more and more actors. The membership of the United Nations has grown from 51 in 1945 to 189 today. The increase is continuing even now, as we will shortly welcome two new Members: Switzerland and East Timor. Furthermore, compared with the initial lot of 51 Members, the current membership of the United Nations comprises a much wider spectrum in terms of political, economic, social and cultural backgrounds. Accordingly the dynamics of the world body has changed dramatically. At the same time, non-State actors, such as international, regional and non-governmental organizations, have also become important players.

Secondly, the world is no longer ideologically divided by the cold war, which had been the dominant feature of international relations during the second half of the twentieth century. In the post-cold-war era, the United Nations has come to play an expanding role in restoring and maintaining peace. Once introduced to fill the gap between the idea of collective security and the reality of unimplemented Charter provisions, United Nations peacekeeping operations have evolved into a highly effective means of furthering peace around the world. At the same time, our world body has been recharged in its work of bringing the community of nations together in the pursuit of universal values and shared standards, brought under the broad rubric of democracy and the market economy.

Thirdly, globalization has come to affect every aspect of international life, with far-reaching implications for the work of the United Nations. As

States become more interdependent, as problems become more trans-border and global in nature, the issues brought to the United Nations continue to expand and diversify. In the process, we find ourselves dealing with both positive and negative aspects of globalization.

While enhancing the well-being of humankind in general, globalization also widens the gap between the haves and the have-nots within and between countries. Bridging the gap and making globalization work to the benefit of all is one important challenge to which the United Nations must rise.

The future of the United Nations depends on how the world body adapts and reforms itself to meet the new challenges in this changing world.

In the final weeks of our work for the main part of our session last December, we all were delighted and heartened by the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize jointly to the United Nations and to Secretary-General Kofi Annan. A number of United Nations agencies had received the prize before, but this was the first time that the United Nations as a whole was so honoured. As I stated at that time, the prize should be viewed as both a recognition of past achievements as well as a summons to move forward towards our goals with renewed energy and dedication. It represents the expectations of the peoples of the world for the United Nations to stand equal to the new challenges facing humankind.

We should not be complacent either about the achievements of the United Nations or its future role. To be sure, the Organization has its shortcomings. United Nations initiatives have not always been successful, nor have its successes always been permanent. Criticism of the United Nations, both fair and unfair, has been a staple of political debate since 1945. Some of the more constructive criticisms have served as useful bases for exploring ways to improve the work of the Organization.

For the longer term, we must ask ourselves how we see the world's only global organization developing in the coming decades. Will it develop into a kind of world government, or will it remain a forum for nation States? The answers do not come easily, and they will depend on fundamental philosophical questions about the nature of history, human societies and nation States.

In any case, being the optimist that I am, I believe that we must begin to explore these questions by placing greater hope in the United Nations. If we seek greater safety and well-being for humanity in general, there must be greater predictability and rule of law in international life. In this rapidly globalizing world, more numerous and diverse actors interact with one another on a constant basis. We should make these interactions more peaceful than violent, more cooperative than confrontational, more productive than wasteful. And at the centre of all of these efforts, we need the United Nations, the only universal body, doing more rather than less.

Now I believe that it is time for me to express my deepest appreciation to all who have helped and supported me in discharging my duties.

First of all, my sincere gratitude goes to all representatives of Member States for their active participation in the meetings and their guidance in conducting the business of the General Assembly. I wish also to thank the Vice-Presidents, who have kindly taken my place on many occasions, and the Chairpersons, Vice-Chairpersons and Rapporteurs of the Main Committees, who did excellent work despite numerous difficulties under unusual circumstances. I should like also to thank the Vice-Chairpersons of the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform and all of those diplomats who worked with me as facilitators on several important issues, including revitalization of the General Assembly and conflict prevention.

My heartfelt appreciation goes to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his invaluable support and guidance. Under-Secretary-General Chen Jian and his dedicated staff of the Department for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, whose name will be changed to the Department for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Management, and my own office staff have consistently provided top-quality and professional assistance. I thank them. I am immensely grateful to them and to all of the members of the Secretariat, including the security officers and interpreters. Last but not least, I thank the Government and the people of my home country, the Republic of Korea. Whether as Foreign Minister or as a former minister, I have always enjoyed their unwavering support for the success of this presidency. Needless to say, there are many others not mentioned here to whom I am equally indebted.

Finally, I should like to offer my best wishes to my successor, President Jan Kavan. I am confident that under his able stewardship, the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly will achieve very fruitful results.

Agenda item 2 (*continued*)

Minute of silent prayer or meditation

The President: We are now coming to the end of the fifty-sixth regular session of the General Assembly. May I invite representatives to stand and observe one minute of silent prayer or meditation.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silent prayer or meditation.

Closure of the fifty-sixth session

The President: I declare closed the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at 3.50 p.m.